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Southeast Conference UNITED CHURCH of CHRIST

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A Word From Tim Downs - February 2012

Dear Friends,

A Free "Do Over"

Over the last four weeks I have heard four sermons while traveling with the Global Theological Education group in Thailand and Korea. Each sermon was an invitation to renewal on the occasion of the New Year, ranging through levels of inspiration. My father used to say that there was no sermons from which you couldn't take something, and I took something from this theme preach in variety of ways, and in a variety of languages.

I am grateful to have this new beginning each year. Grateful that I, and for that matter many of us, can pause and say "let's try this a new way, let's try this over". I think of the New Year as a free **"do over"**. For us as Christians, it is by grace that we are renewed, that we are invited "not to be conformed, but transformed". In Asia, the New Year is a time not only to look forward but to look back as well. We were invited to look back at those who have loved us, and made all we have possible, our forebears and ancestors. We are invited to look forward, moving past those things that have hurt, or constrained us. I wish for you, and for us as a conference a season of new beginnings built on the richness of all we have inherited.

Peace,

Tim Downs

Timothy C. Downs
Conference Minister

UCC News

UCC Newsroom
Headlines from the United Church of Christ

Driskell uses broad brush to inspire Black History Month worship gathering

The "good news" can be delivered via myriad methods, and if you ask David C. Driskell, it may well involve a paintbrush, a keyboard or a strong set of pipes. Appearing on the eve of the Lenten season as part of the UCC's celebration of Black History Month, the 80-year-old Driskell is one of the world's leading authorities on African-American art.

THE CENTER FOR PROGRESSIVE RENEWAL

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Southeast Conference Campaign
Steps to Planting a New Church
Global Theological Education

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News From Our Local Churches - February 2012

Winter Retreat at Blowing Rock

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Weekend has become a gathering time at the Blowing Rock Conference Center for the youth of the Southeast and Southern Conferences of the UCC for a number of years. Each year more and more youth and young adults bring to the annual Winter Youth Retreat (WYR) their thoughts and enthusiasm. This year's retreat welcomed 185 dynamic perspectives on the theme of "Justice Makers: A Call to Action."

Each year we are amazed by the depth with which our youth engage these topics, and we are extremely pleased to know that the churches in these two conferences support youth ministry and youth leadership. Our hope is that the knowledge gained by the leaders who bring the kids each year and who help to guide our small groups will carry over to the congregations and will help strengthen the various youth ministries in our denomination, for they are an integral piece of our justice making efforts. Link and select "Awesome Winter Retreat."

Click for Slideshow! Click for Slideshow!

Youth Travel in Search of Snow

The youth from First Congregational Church in Atlanta traveled to Blowing Rock, North Carolina for the annual winter retreat. "It was a great experience for me to explore my faith," said Aaron Cheese, a 10th grader who was excited to

participate this year. "By sharing stories of injustices, the youth were given a chance to see that injustice anywhere, whether it is happening to their neighbors or to someone half way around the world, affects us all," said Mo Morgan, an adult volunteer.

Although the focus of the retreat was justice, skiing ended up being a big part of the weekend. For many it was their first experience. Moreover, as exciting as it was to play in the snow, the ultimate take away message was how we can be involved in the greater work of the UCC and in justice work at home. Link and select "Awesome Winter Retreat."

Interfaith Leaders at 3-Day Dedication Program

Sheikh Jamal Rahman, Rabbi Ted Falcon and Pastor Don Mackenzie, interfaith religious leaders, shared their beliefs during the three-day expansion dedication program at Pleasant Hill Community Church, United Church of Christ.

Click for Slide Show Click for Slide Show

The church expansion project was finished just in time for Christmas 2011. The formal dedication of the expansion was a three-day affair highlighted by the visit of three unique friends — a rabbi, a pastor and a sheikh. They often call themselves the “interfaith amigos” on their Interfaith Talk Radio show in the state of Washington. Their relationship goes to the heart of interfaith understanding and embodies a revolutionary spirit of healing. *View more event photos by clicking on the slide show on left.*

Link to the Crossville Chronicle website to read the entire article.

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Lifting Up . . . February 2012

Once again, the southeast has suffered Tornado Damage, especially the state of Alabama. Unseasonably warm January temperatures triggered several bouts of severe thunderstorms and tornadoes. Please keep those afflicted with this destruction in prayer and lift up those who are traveling to assist our neighbors in need. *(photo courtesy of Associated Press)*

Disaster Relief: How Can You Help?

Registration is Open for Volunteers in 2012 Long-Term Disaster Recovery, Birmingham, AL.

The teams are forming to work on the tornado damage suffered at the end of April last year. Now there is more damage stretching across the southern states. Long-Term recovery has just begun. Read on to see how you may be of assistance to those in need.

THE CENTER FOR PROGRESSIVE RENEWAL

« < February 2012 > »

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
29	30	31	1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18

Feature Focus - February 2012

46 Years Young

2016 will mark the fiftieth year since the organization of the Southeast Conference of the UCC.

In preparation for this noteworthy anniversary the Board of Directors of the conference has supported Michael Stroud as he researches the history of the Conference in preparing to write a book about these fifty years. We will feature some of the remarkable stories that are scattered across our history as a part of the conference e-newsletter. Today, we offer you the first of these stories. We are deeply grateful to Michael Stroud for his commitment to this project and we hope that you will both enjoy and be inspired by it!

Alabama | Georgia | Mississippi | South Carolina | Tennessee | NW Florida

The Last Conference

The Southeast Conference was the last of the conferences of the United Church of Christ to be organized following the formation of the denomination in 1957. An initial attempt to organize the Southeast Conference failed on a first vote in 1964 by the Southeast Convention, but delegates approved the matter to be reviewed again the following year. The Convention of the South approved the joining relationship on its first vote. On April 24, 1965. The new Southeast Conference began operations on New Year's Day 1966.

Link here to read the complete article and others from the history of the SECUCC.

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Conference News - February 2012

Clothed with the Sun

The Reverend Joyce C. Hollyday, Co-Pastor of Circle of Mercy Church UCC, Asheville, NC and former Associate Conference Minister of the Southeast Conference will facilitate ***"Clothed with the Sun: Writing Autobiography as Spiritual Journey,"*** March 9-11, 2012, at The Sabbath House, Bryson City, NC.
Link here for more information.

An SEC Leader's Devotion to Opposing the Death Penalty

Joe Ingle, a Southeast Conference UCC minister, has devoted his life to a ministry on death rows across the South. Once a nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize for his faithful and prophetic work, Joe has been a leader in the United States opposing the death penalty. He is announcing the April release of his most recent book, entitled ***The Inferno: A Southern Morality Tale***, the story of Philip Workman, recently executed by the state of Tennessee. The book will be available on Amazon, and in bookstores. Ingle is available to churches and other venues to speak about the book, his life ministry, and would welcome invitations to speak and preach. He can be contacted at (615) 218-1657 or (615) 242-5179 or ***by email***. We encourage churches to invite Ingle, an eloquent advocate against one of the most unjust manifestations of the brutal excesses of state power.

Sister Helen Prejean, the international renowned author of *Dead Man Walking*, has written this about Ingle's book: "This is a remarkable book. It chronicles the 25 year journey of Philip Workman through what U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun termed "the machinery of death". It is the most detailed, intimate and complete look at a death row prisoner that I have encountered. The story is told through Ingle's eyes as Workman's pastor; the perspective of another condemned prisoner; and courtesy of the Tennessee Public Records Act, the viewpoint of the state officials who colluded to see that Workman was executed despite MORE THAN AMPLE EVIDENCE that he did not murder the police officer who he was convicted of killing. A memoir such as this is wrenching for it raises fundamental questions about our moral fabric as a nation. What does it mean to kill people, in our names, who do not kill people and are not eligible for the death penalty? These and other questions are addressed in the book as the reader descends with Philip Workman into the Inferno. It is a journey, like Dante's in the original Inferno, that will leave your soul transformed."

Join Us at the Upcoming Annual Conference Meetings

Associations across the Southeast Conference will meet in March.

1) Georgia-South Carolina Association, UCC
Saturday, March 3rd
Decatur United Church of Christ
109 Hibernia Avenue

Decatur, GA 30030

Early Registration encouraged

Our 2012 Annual Meeting will be hosted by one of our newest congregations, Decatur UCC. A presentation will be made on th eGlobal Theological Education event.

Click here for meeting information and registration.

2) Alabama-Tennessee Association, UCC
Friday & Saturday, March 16-17
Pleasant Hill Community Church
67 Church Drive
Pleasant Hill, TN 38578

Early registration is needed (by Feb 24) to make room for the whole family; childern and all youth.

Theme: Gather the People - All the People
Click here for meeting information and registration.

Bicycle Ride for the Congo

A bicycle ride has been scheduled **March 10-17** (Spring Break) to raise funds for the Congo. The ride will conclude with a celebration at Tougaloo College. We invite cycling enthusiasts across the SEC to join us for this event. Download event flyer and registration information.

Just Eating?

Practicing our faith at the table through study and prayer.

While this phrase could mean only eating, the word, JUST, also means 'being honorable and fair in one's dealings.' This play on words captures a paradox that this curriculum addresses. Eating can be a mundane activity done with little thought or reflection; or it can be an opportunity to thoughtfully live out our faith and practice justice." Take a look at this program for Lent.

The Collegium invites and encourages all to participate and engage in dialogue and discussion during the Lenten Season using the Just Eating? curriculum.

Link here for more information on this program.

"Silver Linings" in April

The **United Church of Christ Support Staff Network** (UCCOSSN) invites all UCC church, associate and conference support staff to attend their 25th Anniversary Celebration & Annual Meeting at the national church house in Cleveland, OH. The event titled "Silver Linings" will take place April 12 - 14 and will include worship, workshops and fellowship. Make plans to join UCC staff from across the nation, register today. Link here for save the date flyer. Link here for registration information.

Psalms to Twitter

Here is an opportunity for gifted writers. "Are you interested in learning more about contributing to a new Pilgrim Press resource From Psalms to Twitter: Worship Resources in a Digital Age by Maria I. Mankin and Maren C. Tirabassi? They are seeking new worship materials and prayers based on contemporary concerns that also are enduring issues in our communities. If you are interested in this opportunity, contact Maria and Maren directly through email.contact Maria and Maren directly through email.

CLOTHED WITH THE SUN:
Writing Autobiography as Spiritual Journey

Facilitated by Joyce Hollyday
March 9-11, 2012
At The Sabbath House
Bryson City, NC

Revelation 12 offers us the image of a woman of power, ready to give birth, with a story to tell. This woman "clothed with the sun" goes off to the wilderness for a time to rest and reflect. In this retreat, participants will share such a "time apart," to discern what stories are waiting to be born. We will keep a daily rhythm of times for reflection, writing, and sharing, and for connecting our personal stories with the larger story of faith. No writing experience is required. All that is needed is a willingness to mine the richness of your own life and spirit, and to offer it as a gift to others.

The retreat will begin with dinner at 6:30 on Friday evening and will conclude with lunch on Sunday. The retreat fee ($325 for single occupancy, $235 for double occupancy, $125 for commuters) includes lodging, all meals and snacks, and programming. **Reserve a space by sending a $75 deposit by February 24. Checks may be mailed to The Sabbath House at 530 Bee Branch Road, Bryson City, NC 28713.**

For more information about The Sabbath House, visit our website at www.sabbathhouse.com or call Jim Strickland or Rachel Lackey, Co-directors, at 828-488-5209.

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Celebrations - February 2012

Bethany Congregational Church UCC celebrated its **121st Church Anniversary** on February 12, 2012. The Rev. Elizabeth Clement from First Congregational Church was the guest Minister.

The Laymen's Fellowship of **First Congregational Christian Church** hosted their **Annual Black History Month Program** on Sunday, February 12, 2012. Minister Dorinda Broadnax member of Community Congregational Church in Montgomery was one of seven women honored at the program. The keynote speaker was be Dr. Elaine C. Harrington of Tuskegee, AL and the theme of the event was "Black Women in American History and Culture."

On Sunday, February 19, 2012 at 3:00 p.m., **Debbie Douglas** will be ordained into Christian ministry. This service will be held in the new sanctuary of Pleasant Hill Community Church in Pleasant Hill, TN. Directions to the Church. Pastor Tom Warren will preach. Debbie has been called as Pastor of **First United Church United Church of Christ** in Belvidere, TN and will be installed there on March 18, 2012.

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